

Jesus' Life and Ministry in the Power of the Spirit

Bruce A. Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY

I. Introduction

- Why would Jesus, the God-man, need to have the Spirit of God upon him? What can the Spirit of God add to the deity of Jesus?
- How can Jesus in his sinless obedience and sacrificial service rightly be upheld as a model for how we should live, since he was the God-man and we are not?

II. The Messiah who would come would be none other than the Spirit-anointed Messiah

A. Three groupings of OT texts announce the Arrival of the Age to Come

1. The Age to Come Comes when the *Messiah*, the Son of David, comes. E.g.:

Isaiah 9:6-7 – For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

Ezekiel 37:24-27— My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. “They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. “My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.”

2. The Age to Come Comes when the *Spirit* comes. E.g.:

Isaiah 44:1-5 – But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, And Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus says the Lord who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, ‘Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. ‘For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants; And they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water.’ “This one will say, ‘I am the Lord’s’; And that one will call on the name of Jacob; And another will write on his hand, ‘Belonging to the Lord,’ And will name Israel’s name with honor.”

Ezekiel 36:22-28 – Therefore say to the house of Israel, “Thus says the Lord God, “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. “I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. “You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.”

3. The Age to Come Comes when the *Spirit-anointed Messiah* comes. E.g.:

Isaiah 11:1-5 – 1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. 3 And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; 4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. 5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist.

Isaiah 61:1-3 – 1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; 2 To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, 3 To grant those who mourn *in Zion*, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

B. The Nature of the Fulfillment of the Promised Age to Come – Progressive, not Punctiliar; Incremental, not Instantaneous.

Helps explain, e.g., John the Baptist's angst: Matthew 11:2-5 – Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

III. Jesus' Empowerment by the Spirit

A. Jesus' Life of Submission and Obedience to the Father in the Power of the Spirit

The Son submitted fully to the Father by the direction and empowerment of the Spirit. The humility of the Son is shown not only in the kenosis (Phil 2:6-8), but also in placing himself under the Spirit's leading, the One over whom he otherwise has authority, and relying on the Spirit's empowerment.

Luke 1:32-35 – He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."

Luke 2:40, 52 – 40 The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. . . . 52 And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Luke 4:1-2a – 1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness 2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. Or, even stronger is Mark's account. Mark 1:12 reads – Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness.

Luke 4:14 – And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.

Luke 4:16-21 – 16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. 17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME

TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, 19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.” 20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Matthew 12:28 – 28 “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Acts 1:1-2 – The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.

Acts 10:38 – 38 “*You know of* Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and *how* He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

B. Jesus’ Resisting Temptation, and Growth in Faith, in the Power of the Spirit

1. Jesus’ Impeccability, Temptations, and Sinlessness

a. Jesus was sinless: 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:21-23

b. Jesus was tempted: Luke 4:1-13; Heb 4:15

c. Jesus was impeccable: Luke 1:35

d. Explaining the reality of Jesus’ temptations in light of his impeccability. Three considerations:

1) He was really tempted “in all things as we are” (Heb 4:15). This cannot be jeopardized.

2) Because he never succumbed to temptation, he experienced its full force

3) Distinction: Why Christ *could not* sin, and why Christ *did not* sin.

2. Jesus’ Growth and Maturity in Faith

Seeing this helps explain some things that otherwise are quite puzzling, to be sure. Consider for example, the following statements about Jesus:

Hebrews 5:8-9 – 8 Although He was a Son, He *learned obedience* from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been *made perfect*, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.

IV. Conclusion

Jesus’ life, ministry, miracles, obedience, resisting temptation, and accomplishing the mission which the Father sent him to accomplish – all this was done in the power of the Spirit. Jesus, then, is the epitome of the new covenant person, living in the power of the Spirit. And as he has now given us his Spirit, we are called to live lives modeled after him. Indeed, we are called to follow in his steps (1 Pet 2:21) and live new covenant lives that bring honor and glory to Christ, by the power of the Spirit.